United Nations A/C.2/54/SR.15

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 November 1999

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 15th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 19 October 1999, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Niculescu (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Romania)

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99-81698 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Mr. Niculescu (Romania), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 97: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*) (A/C.2/54/L.2, L.3 and L.4)

(d) Science and technology for development (*continued*)

Draft resolution on science and technology for development (A/C.2/54/L.4)

1. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it drew attention to the importance of science and technology in the context of globalization. In particular, it encouraged the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to expand the scope of its deliberations on the theme "National capacity-building in biotechnology". In light of the fact that the theme of the Economic and Social Council's high-level segment for its substantive session of 2000 was "Development and international cooperation in the twenty-first century: the role of information technology in the context of a knowledge-based global economy", the resolution requested the General Assembly to consider the question of science and technology for development at its fifty-fifth session, rather than in two years as currently planned.

2. Lastly, he read out a correction: in paragraph 19, the words "new and innovative technologies" should be followed by ", in particular, information and communication technologies,".

(e) External debt crisis and development (*continued*)

Draft resolution on enhancing international cooperation towards a durable solution to the external debt problem of developing countries (A/C.2/54/L.2)

3. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, noted that in the current text, greater attention than in the past had been devoted to the debt-related problems of categories other than that of the highly indebted poor countries and, in particular, to the middle-income developing countries.

Agenda item 105: Implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) (*continued*)

Draft resolution on implementation of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (A/C.2/54/L.3)

4. **Mr. Talbot** (Guyana), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, made two corrections to the text: the word "developing" in paragraph 8 should read "developed" and the word "and" should be inserted after "financial" in paragraph 14.

Agenda item 99: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (A/54/56, A/54/97-E/1999/52, A/54/170, A/54/171-E/1999/111 and A/C.2/54/5)

(a) Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (A/54/389)

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) (A/54/8 and A/54/322)

(d) Human resources development (A/54/408)

(e) International migration and development, including the question of the convening of a United Nations conference on international migration and development to address migration issues (A/54/207 and A/C.2/54/2)

(g) Renewal of the dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership (A/54/94-S/1999/518 and A/54/328)

5. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs) introduced the note by the Secretary-General on themes for the second high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership (A/54/328) and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation and of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade (A/54/389), two reports which were closely related. The issues covered by the latter had been before the Committee

for the past decade, while the dialogue covered in the first-mentioned note had begun only in 1998.

6. Both reports took stock of progress during the 1990s. The Declaration on International Economic Cooperation and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade had both been conceived at the end of the 1980s, a decade often labelled as "lost" for development. Consequently, both had focused on the need to ensure the revitalization of economic growth and development in developing countries. The report described some improvements from a social and economic perspective, yet pointed to recent major setbacks as a result of the world financial crisis and warned against heightened danger of marginalization for the weaker members of the world community. For the developing countries as a whole, international financial developments in the 1990s had been broadly favourable, including trends in net long-term resource flows and foreign direct investment (FDI). At the same time, many countries had faced continuing debt servicing problems, and the decline in official development assistance (ODA) had been a disturbing trend. Trade had figured prominently in both the Declaration and the Strategy, and a great deal of progress had been made with regard to trade liberalization. Developing countries had become important actors in the global trading system. At the same time, however, many imbalances persisted, and depressed prices posed severe problems for commodity exporters. The Strategy had included a number of specific targets with regard to human resources development, few of which would be met in full, despite some progress.

7. It was interesting to note that neither the Declaration nor the Strategy mentioned the word "globalization", an issue currently of burning interest. Still, many of the challenges they identified were still facing the world economy. At the eve of the new millennium, the new realities would have to be accommodated and policies modified accordingly. The high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership was a promising vehicle for such changes. The note by the Secretary-General on that topic (A/54/328) was based on the understanding that the dialogue should not be an isolated event, but an important step in a comprehensive effort to strengthen international cooperation for development.

8. Although there had been some doubts before the first dialogue, the consensus was that the meeting had been productive and that the dialogue should continue. The two main messages which had come through from the meeting were that globalization had a profound impact on all aspects of policy at all levels and thus should be the focus of attention for the United Nations, and that the Organization was uniquely suited to provide comprehensive and relevant responses to that phenomenon. With that in mind, the next meeting should focus on two policy approaches with great potential for meeting the challenges of globalization, namely, strengthening regional cooperation, and building new partnerships, including with the private sector and non-governmental organizations.

9. **Mr. Chamie** (Director of the Population Division), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on international migration and development (A/54/207), said that the report, which had been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 52/189, discussed ways and means to address the problems related to migration and development, including the possibility of convening an international conference on international migration and development. Of the 76 Governments which had given their views on the convening of a conference, 45 generally favoured the conference, 26 had strong reservations and 5 considered that other options should be pursued first. Those with reservations about the conference felt that scarce resources could be put to better use for the implementation of existing agreements, for instance the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, and that existing mechanisms and bilateral negotiations were a better way to deal with the issues involved. Those favouring the conference emphasized the need to safeguard the rights of migrants. However, there was a lack of consensus on the Conference's goals and objectives, funding and the composition of its secretariat. Many of the Governments responding suggested that a conference could be financed by special contributions, yet donor Governments were a majority of those having strong reservations.

10. He drew attention to some recent developments in the area of migration, including a report on statistics of international migration which had been adopted by the Statistical Commission at its twenty-ninth session. The Task Force on Basic Social Services for All of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had also organized a Technical Symposium on International Migration and Development in June 1998. In addition, the recently concluded twenty-first special session of the General Assembly had adopted key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, a number of which addressed international migration and development.

11. Among mechanisms outside the United Nations system, the activities of the International Organization for

Migration (IOM) deserved particular mention, especially in the light of the growing cooperation between the United Nations system and IOM. Regional initiatives would also continue to be effective in addressing such issues, and a series of intergovernmental meetings at the regional level, for example the recent Bangkok symposium, were advancing the dialogue between countries of origin and destination.

12. **Mr. Rao** (Director of Technical and Regional Cooperation, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)) introduced the report of the Commission on Human Settlements on the work of its seventeenth session (A/54/8) and the report of the Secretary-General on the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda (A/54/322). While the world added a quarter million people to its population every day, the world's cities were growing by a million people each week. A consensus was emerging that, in the next century, cities would hold the key to sustainable development, economic growth, political and economic stability and domestic peace. It was clear that the cities of the future would exert significant influence on overall economic growth at national and regional levels. Efforts to overcome poverty through economic growth must be supplemented by efforts to avoid the pitfalls of urbanization.

13. Poverty was increasingly becoming an urban phenomenon, and was not merely the equivalent of a lack of income or consumption. It included physical isolation, vulnerability, insecure livelihoods, social exclusion and powerlessness, and discrimination against women. The feminization of poverty was another aspect of urbanization. Women's economic opportunities were constrained by their lack of control over crucial decisions related to resource use. Enhancement of women's rights and control over resources would be central to improving urban management, and it was imperative to involve them in the local planning and decision-making process.

14. The problems of cities and rural areas were closely linked, and successful solution of the one was a necessary precondition for successful solution of the other. Many Governments, however, were unprepared and underfunded to deal with the scale of the urban as well as the rural challenge. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements had to determine how best it could contribute to the global response to urban zation and how to strengthen itself and enhance its credibility and administrative and operational efficiency. For that reason a revitalization team, appointed in September 1998, had produced a new strategic vision whereby the Centre would adopt the style and profile of a global advocacy agency and, by utilizing the principles of social justice and equity, focus on maximizing its impact through human settlement programmes that would lead to urban poverty reduction. Accordingly, the Centre was now mandated by the Commission on Human Settlements to use two global campaigns as strategic entry points into the Habitat Agenda, the first being adequate shelter for all and the second sustainable urban development. At its seventeenth session, the Commission on Human Settlements had adopted a resolution mandating the Executive Director to implement the new strategic vision through two subprogrammes and recommended that the Centre should confirm its status as the United Nations agency for cities and human settlements.

15. In another resolution, on the Habitat work programme and budget for the biennium 2000-2001, the Commission had confirmed that the reorganization from four to two subprogrammes reflected the need for improved focus and provided direct correspondence with the two themes of the Habitat Agenda. It also recommended that the medium-term plan for the period 2000-2005 have the same strategic focus.

16. The revitalization team had recommended the establishment of the Planning and Coordination Office, the rationalization of funding and resource mobilization, and the identification of potential joint synergies with the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Office at Nairobi. It had also proposed a new organizational structure for the Centre to enable it better to implement its work programme within the context of the strategic vision and to allow it to concentrate the bulk of its human and financial resources on that task.

17. The Commission on Human Settlements had also adopted a resolution inviting the Secretary-General to consider the recruitment of qualified staff as a matter of urgency, and requested the Executive Director to focus on the quality and efficiency of management in the context of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/119. As required by that resolution, the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation budget for the biennium 2000-2001 had been prepared along the lines of the harmonized budget model followed by other United Nations agencies. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions had welcomed Habitat's attempt to improve the format and presentation of its budget document.

18. The Commission on Human Settlements had also adopted a resolution on follow up to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), requiring action by the General Assembly at the present session.

19. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/180, the Commission on Human Settlements, acting as the

Preparatory Committee for the special session of the General Assembly for an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, had held its organizational session in May 1999, and the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/54/322) was before the Committee for its consideration. The Commission, at its seventeenth session, had also adopted a resolution on the special session, requesting the Economic and Social Council to consider at its coordinating segment in the year 2000 the issues of international cooperation for the implementation of adequate shelter for all; the role of the Habitat Agenda partners in its implementation; and capacity-building and institutional development, including the mobilization of the resident coordinator system for implementation of the Habitat Agenda at the country level. The Economic and Social Council had designated "coordinated implementation by the United Nations system of the Habitat Agenda" as a sectoral theme under its coordinating segment for the year 2000.

20. Turning to Habitat's critical financial situation, he said that the Commission on Human Settlements, at its seventeenth session, had adopted a resolution requesting the Executive Director to raise more funds and broaden the donor base. The situation regarding voluntary contributions to the Foundation was still critical, with some traditional donors still not having pledged for 1999 and unpaid pledges of about US$ 0.41 million.

21. With overall endorsement of its revitalization process by the Commission on Human Settlements at its seventeenth session, the Centre was now fully reorganized for implementation of the Habitat Agenda. It had full transparency and accountability and was newly equipped for a fruitful partnership with the World Bank, UNDP and other bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. What was now required was expansion of its resource base through an increase in the share of general purpose resources, a widening of the donor base, the honouring and early payment of pledges and long-term commitments by donors, including multi-year pledges.

22. **Mr. Jacklen** (Director of the Private Sector Development Programme, UNDP), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on developing human resources for development (A/54/408), said that it examined the challenges and constraints that had beset the development of human resources, including the Asian economic and financial crisis, globalization and rapid change, and that it focused on the identification of new approaches to developing human resources for development. Increasingly, the international community was moving towards a holistic approach which regarded development as transformation of the whole society and provided a broader and sounder foundation for closer cooperation between the United Nations system and the World Bank.

23. With regard to new areas and orientations, the report focused on the emerging knowledge and information society, which was one of the central features of the globalizing world and affected all countries. Countries were using a variety of innovative strategies and approaches that were designed to build capacity for leapfrogging over the industrial stage of development and into the information age, and the United Nations system was actively supporting the efforts of developing countries to achieve universal access to the learning opportunities of information and communication technologies. The United Nations system could support country initiatives in creating opportunities for people and communities to leapfrog into the information age, and could develop a global monitoring strategy to record and promote progress in that regard as an integral part of continued concern with and commitment to developing human resources for development.

24. **Ms. Critchlow** (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and in the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Decade, remained valid and deserved to command the continuing attention of the international community. However, throughout the Decade, efforts to strengthen the Declaration and Strategy had encountered many setbacks, not least of which had been the shocks suffered by the global economy in the past decade, which had had particularly adverse economic and social consequences for developing countries. Coupled with the negative ramifications of globalization and a manifest decline in official commitment to international cooperation, it was not surprising that the aims of the Declaration and Strategy had yet to materialize. The promise of the 1990s as the decade of "accelerated development in the developing countries and strengthened international cooperation" had largely evaporated, with many countries suffering increased poverty and economic marginalization, as well as internecine warfare, conflicts and the effects of natural disasters.

25. Such realities made it necessary to reassess the goals and the timetables for their achievement. Developing countries could not keep pace with the industrialized, knowledge-based societies of the North unless real progress was made towards an equitable integration of all countries in the international economy. Only then could international

cooperation for development yield the results envisaged in the Fourth United Nations Development Decade.

26. Some progress had been made with respect to human settlement development since the Habitat II Conference. There had been a rapidly increasing demand, however, for adequate shelter and basic services, particularly in urban centres, and the means effectively to deal with that demand were inadequate. Developing countries had found it particularly hard to respond to rapid urbanization, and the Group of 77 and China called for immediate and intensified action with respect to increased funding for programmes related to human settlement development. At the same time, the rural dimension of the Habitat Agenda should not be neglected.

27. The progress made thus far in the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the Habitat Agenda was welcome. The session would benefit greatly from the presentation of a comprehensive report on the state of the world's cities. It was also encouraging to know that the Habitat Centre was now fully organized to implement the programmes necessary to ensure that people were provided with adequate shelter and safe and healthy living conditions in an increasingly urbanized world.

28. Human resources development was of critical importance to the promotion of economic and social development, especially in the current context of globalization, where knowledge-based enterprise took on an ever greater importance in the global economy. The United Nations should give more focused attention to that issue. The Group of 77 and China therefore welcomed the focus of the Secretary-General's report on information and communications technology as it related to human resources development.

29. Population and development concerns were inextricably linked and should be treated in an integrated fashion in any dialogue on development. The profound effect that international migration was having on the countries of origin, destination and transit was hardly likely to decrease, in view of the challenges that developing countries were facing as a result of globalization and trade liberalization, coupled with the increase in the number of national and regional conflicts. The need to assess the impact of international migration, share experiences and explore ways and means of making it work for the benefit of all concerned, particularly developing countries, had gained added urgency in recent times. In that context, the Government of Thailand was to be commended for organizing, in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration, an international symposium to promote international awareness and foster political will among Asian countries to effectively address the issue of international migration. Similar action should be encouraged in other regions, since the sharing of experiences between countries as well as the availability of data on migration were vital to developing long-term strategies aimed at making international migration work for developing countries.

30. In order for the dialogue on international economic cooperation to be credible, it should enable the international community, in particular developing countries, to deal in an effective manner with both the promise and perils of globalization. In view of its broad mandate, the United Nations had a key role to play in international efforts to harness the process of globalization for long-term development.

31. **Ms. Rasi** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland, said that many of the principles and objectives of the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade had not been met as expected. In that regard, the figures in the Secretary-General's report (A/54/389) concerning progress made and remaining challenges were a cause for considerable concern. The international community must sustain its commitment to the achievement of the international development targets derived from the major United Nations conferences and summits. Indeed, only consistent, coherent, integrated and coordinated action would ensure effective implementation of the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits. The European Union therefore welcomed the Economic and Social Council's decision to assess progress made within the United Nations system in the promotion of an integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits during its next substantive session. The General Assembly should be involved in that process.

32. Turning to the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), she noted that it was important, in the preparatory process for the five-year review of Habitat II, to be open-ended and transparent. A constructive partnership and participation by local authorities and the relevant actors of civil society, including the private sector, in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda were crucial. The preparatory process should be used as an opportunity to

further enhance the implementation of the Agenda, by assessing constraints, enhancing cooperation between all relevant actors and considering further actions and initiatives required to support the implementation process. The sustainable development of both urban and rural human settlements was directly linked to poverty and poverty alleviation. There was an urgent need to address urban poverty. Moreover, international cooperation for the implementation of the Habitat Agenda was important in supporting national implementation.

33. On human resources development, she said that unless the emergence of the information age was properly managed, it might threaten to further marginalize those who were already disadvantaged. Efforts should therefore be strengthened to ensure that the benefits from information and knowledge were more evenly distributed between developing and developed countries, and between urban and rural populations. Particular attention should be given to the world's poor and other vulnerable groups. There was considerable potential in information and communications technology for helping the most disadvantaged women to gain increased access to the information they needed in order to benefit from new economic and social opportunities. Women's needs and social and economic realities must be fully taken into account when formulating national information and communications technology policies. In that regard, since women still accounted for 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people living in absolute poverty, they deserved preferential attention in human resources development strategies.

34. While the European Union recognized that international migration and its relation to development was a highly relevant and complex issue, it believed that the issue should be examined within the existing mechanisms of the United Nations, rather than at a United Nations conference. Migration, demographic and economic situations varied greatly among countries and regions. The Secretary-General's report (A/54/207) highlighted many facts which would favour a regional approach to the issue. Furthermore, the migration question must be considered in an integrated way which included, among other things, development issues. Indeed, that was how the Cairo Programme of Action looked at migration.

35. The European Union believed that the dialogue on strengthening cooperation for development through partnership should continue to be closely linked to the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly, in particular the Second Committee, while avoiding duplication of themes and format. Since the agenda for 2000 was already full of important meetings and events, consideration should be given to the possibility of postponing the next high-level dialogue to the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. She reiterated the European Union's support for the theme "Generating an enabling national and international environment for mobilizing domestic resources for development in the global economy", which was more focused and provided an opportunity to tackle several important items, including the impact of globalization in developing countries and capacity-building.

36. **Mr. Ortique** (United States of America) said that in order to address the promise and risks of the next millennium, there was a need to move beyond business as usual with respect to human development and move towards new frontiers, particularly by incorporating information technology into development. While the report of the Secretary-General on developing human resources for development (A/54/408) was, overall, an excellent addition to the documentation on the subject, it could have been stronger in two areas. First, after highlighting many examples of information technology driving development initiatives, the report barely mentioned Net Aid, the ambitious project involving UNDP, Cisco Systems, and other partners. Net Aid had an enormous potential to contribute to human resource development. Secondly, there should have been broader consideration of human rights in the context of human resources development. The vital role of human rights had been specifically cited in General Assembly resolution 52/196. While the report cited the empowerment of women, youth, the excluded and other subsets of broader efforts on human rights, it failed to highlight the fact that a holistic programme of human rights promotion could maximize the benefits of human resources development.

37. With regard to strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership, his delegation had proposed the theme "strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership: engaging the private sector" for the next high-level dialogue because it believed that strengthening international economic cooperation for development would be realized when countries reached out and involved key partners, including those in the private sector. The private sector played a key role, *inter alia*, in encouraging FDI, promoting economic development and making efficient use of domestic resources. Such a proposal was in line with the Secretary-General's recent statements on the importance of strengthening the partnership with business for the purpose of development.

38. Expressing appreciation for the efforts undertaken to strengthen the United Nations system's implementation of

the Habitat Agenda, he welcomed the agreement reached on the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening the United Nations system in the area of environment and human settlements (A/53/463), in particular those recommendations related to improving the workings of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements. He also wished to reiterate his delegation's support for the new approach to the Centre's work programme, adopted by the Commission on Human Settlements to focus on two programme areas. While his delegation welcomed the progress achieved thus far, it remained concerned at the lack of a full-time Executive Director for the Centre and encouraged the Secretary-General to renew efforts to identify an Executive Director as soon as possible to further facilitate the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

The meeting rose at noon.